

THE MISSOURIAN MAGAZINE

Special Saturday Section of The Columbia Missourian

VOLUME XXI

COLUMBIA, MISSOURI, FEBRUARY 9, 1929

NUMBER 135

Joe Harris Gives Horse Judging Pointers

Boone County Circuit Clerk Was Exhibitor 20 Years and Says Modern Transportation Does Not Lessen Fascination of Fine Horses; Still Owns Peter Pan

Automobiles and other modern forms of transportation have largely supplanted horses on the street, but they have not dimmed the interest of ardent horse lovers in horse shows where the best of the various breeds are brought together, thinks Joe T. Harris, circuit clerk of Boone County.

Mr. Harris was an exhibitor of horses for twenty years and only abandoned it as a regular activity a few years ago when he went into public office. However, he still judges at horse shows occasionally. He is the owner of Peter Pan, famous roadster horse, now retired from exhibition.

In discussing the art of horse judging, Mr. Harris said:

"It is necessary, of course, that every judge have a very definite ideal as to what a perfect horse in each of the various classes should be. First, a horse must have such conformation as is required for the particular class in which he is entered or exhibited—conformation such as is required in doing best the particular job for which the class may call. However, he may have conformation 100 per cent, and lacking other necessary points be kept from being a winner. Together with conformation certain other qualities, style, beauty, animation, expression, and manner are always seriously considered in arriving at a decision, and the lack of any one of them may make him a second rater. He must have what is sometimes called 'It,' better termed 'air' or 'presence.'"

"In the classes of three or five-gaited saddle horses, conformation, style, beauty, and action are of supreme importance. The heavy harness class is one which is often misunderstood by laymen. These horses are not meant for heavy work, as is often supposed, but on the contrary are beautiful, majestic animals which attract immediate attention by their high, bold step."

Mr. Harris says that judging after all is largely a matter of personal opinion. Every exhibitor is in a measure a judge himself and usually has a pretty definite idea of the rank his horse is going to take after they are all lined up.

"Perhaps hunters and jumpers come the nearest to having fixed judging standards of any of the classes," he continued. "Some years ago Walter L. Parmer conceived and put into circulation a score card for judging these classes. This card has been unanimously adopted and thus the judging is more uniform than for most other classes of horses."

Years ago it was customary at small fairs to select judges in a manner similar to that in which jurors were selected—choosing men of good standing in the community, but often with very little knowledge of how to make awards. Now, however, all recognized shows insist that the management have judges who have had at least some education on how to make intelligent awards.

Mr. Harris was also the exhibitor of Prince Albert, name of Peter Pan. Boone County was the home of a number of the most famous horses winning awards consistently that have ever been shown in American horse shows. Among these were Rex McDonald, a five-gaited horse; Forest King, a

five-gaited saddle horse; and Charles Reed, probably the most famous sire of light harness horses ever exhibited in the United States horse shows. Peter Pan was the son of Charles Reed.

Some of the classes of horses most commonly shown in all recognized horse shows are three and five-gaited saddle horses, roadsters, hackneys, polo ponies, harness horses, mounts, hunters and jumpers.

Rex McDonald, shown on this page, is a famous Missouri saddle horse. He was formerly owned by the Rex McDonald Company at Columbia, and brought \$2750 when sold to B. R. Middleton and W. F. Atkinson of Mexico, Mo., in 1910. His fame has been so widespread that the names of Columbia and Mexico, where he was owned, are

St. Louis gave on the eve of July 4th, when R. E. Hisey, of the firm of Hisey and Lee, of Mexico, Mo., asked him what he would sell Rex McDonald for.

"Every horse has a price," said Mr. Hisey.

"Rex hasn't," said Mr. Orthwein. "He is mine for good and all, he is the king of saddle horses and I intend to keep him for the term of his natural life."

"He is a grand horse, all right, and I want to own him," said Mr. Hisey. "I will give \$10,000 in cold cash for him, and you can keep the halter."

"You could not get him for twice \$10,000," replied Mr. Orthwein. "Rex is not for sale, I bought him because I had an ambition to own the greatest saddle horse in the world, and I intend to

keep him. Besides, I regard him as having an intrinsic value larger than the amount you offer for him."

"What will you take for him?" said the man from Mexico."

"He is not for sale at any price," said Mr. Orthwein. "Now, what'll you take?" and that closed the discourse as to the sale of Rex McDonald."

An understanding of the desirable and undesirable qualities in horses and a knowledge of the value of each helps in the selection of the best animal in a short time.

Weaving in horses is very undesirable, for in the process of throwing their heads from one side to the other constantly, they use up much energy that may be needed for other purposes. The temperament of a horse is

an index to his disposition and nerve force. For instance, a nervous, excitable horse is hard to control, while the phlegmatic horse, though gentle, lacks ambition and endurance. Large, mild, bright eyes indicate a desirable temperament. Also width between the eyes and behind the ears, and an alert, active, graceful carriage when in motion.

A clean-cut throatlatch on a crested neck of good length gives a horse style and beauty of outline.

Perfection in the walking gait is characterized by the feet being brought up quickly from the ground, by their being carried in a straight line, and by the cycle being completed quickly.

"Soundness, too, is of course of prime importance. No judge would award a premium to any

animal that possessed some physical defect that would unfit him for that particular work for which he was intended," Mr. Harris said. "Judging is a process of elimination, selecting those animals that come nearer to the ideal that the judge has in mind, and for which the premium is offered. As the horses pass before the judge for inspection, he will readily eliminate the undesirable for various reasons; he may be too large or too small; he may be unsound, or perhaps his manners bad, or any one of many different things. The judge is sometimes criticized by the audience on his decision, for of course in his close inspection he may discover some important defect that the audience is in ignorance of."

"When horses appear in the area for inspection they have been carefully prepared for their exhibition by clever owners who have nothing undone to cover up any weakness (Continued on page 3.)



Joe T. Harris, Boone County's circuit clerk, driving Peter Pan and Prince Albert in 1923.

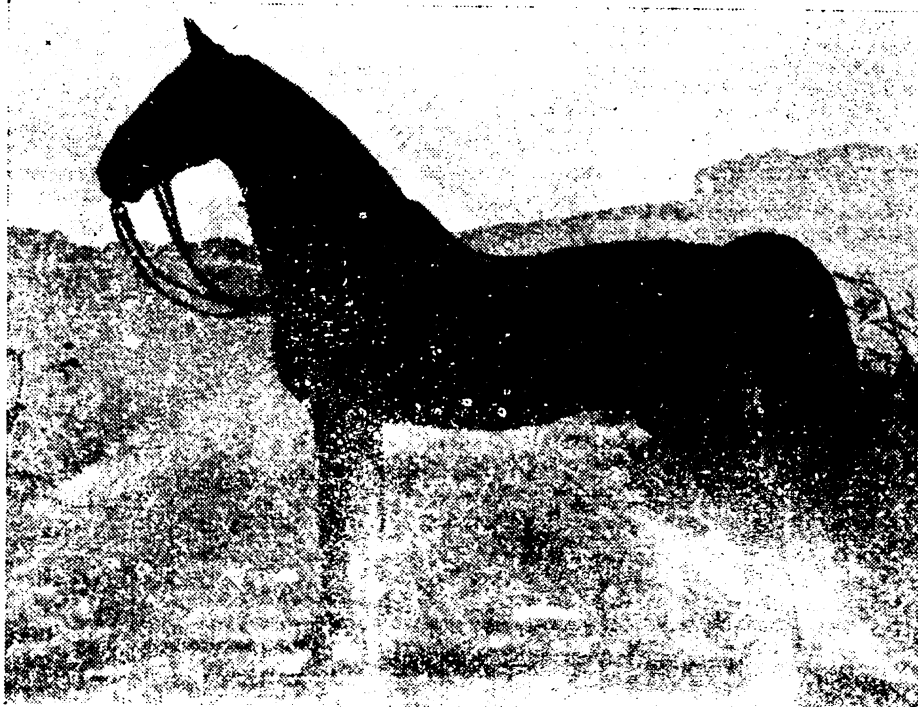
very familiar to horse lovers.

"Probably no other horse had such a victorious career as Rex McDonald as saddle horse champion," says one author. "He was a horse of beautiful conformation, of a blue black raven color. He was endowed with that creeping suppleness and grace which is sometimes found in horses, and occasionally in human beings. In canter he always maintained a perfect balance with a retarded movement which suggested a rocking chair or cradle."

At one time his owner was offered \$10,000 for him, a price which he refused. The book, "Short Stories About Famous Saddle Horses," gives the following account of this transaction:

"He is not for sale at any price."

"This is the answer that Ralph Orthwein of



Rex McDonald, famous Missouri saddle horse owned first by Charles Reed, then by B. R. Middleton.